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ABSTRACT

Eleven female students, in a graduate education course entitled "Mental Health and Human Interaction," participated in a single 24-hour sensitivity training group and were studied to identify personality changes resulting from the session. During the marathon session, an aura of warmth, acceptance, and security was maintained, creating an open atmosphere in which the leader emphasized support and encouraged individuality. Each member was administered the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) and the Rotter Incomplete Sentences Blank (RISB) before and after the session. Participants were also interviewed within 1 week after the session. One month after the session, when participants again completed the CPI, 8 of its 18 subscales showed significant improvement: (1) socialization; (2) social presence; (3) tolerance; (4) sociability; (5) social acceptance; (6) state of well being; (7) responsibility; and (8) self control. Significant improvement was noted on the RISB scores for conflict and self-esteem. Study results indicate that sensitivity training may be beneficial in teacher training since it can provide a supportive atmosphere for self-disclosure and getting in touch with feelings, allowing teachers to become more aware of students' needs. (FG)

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SENSITIVITY TRAINING FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS

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In the past 20 years there have been over five million Americans who have at one time or another participated in some type of group activity aimed at personal growth or change. Several million more are members of self-help groups, and tens of thousands have participated in counseling and psychotherapy groups (Johnson, et al. 1982). The underlying purpose of most growth groups, is to help participants achieve some kind of behavior and cognitive change that increases competence in management of interpersonal relationships. In turn, this results in more productive, self-enhancing, and fulfilling lives.

One of the main agents of personal growth is self-disclosure, the realization that others have similar feelings and insight into one's problems. Self-disclosure can be cathartic when participants discover that no one is shocked by their deep hidden "secrets" that have always made them feel ashamed, guilty, depressed, or angry. In a classic study of growth groups, Lieberman, Yalom, and Miles (1973) found that self-disclosure involving some sort of cognitive mastery or understanding, not self-disclosure in and of itself, was related to positive change.

There have been allegations that sensitivity groups create levels of anxiety that are potentially dangerous psychologically. When examining anxiety levels in college students before and after participating in growth groups, Johnson, Kavanaugh, and Lubin (1973) found that participants at the beginning of the growth group were less anxious than those at the end of the growth group when administered a final examination. Also, participant anxiety after the growth group was over was found to be considerably less than experienced after a final examination. A number of investigators have felt that an educator's skills in the area of interpersonal relationships, his personality characteristics, and value system are more important than

his professional training. After reviewing the research, Barr (1935) concluded that qualities that are readily measured (e.g., knowledge of subject matter and mastery of teaching skills) are overshadowed by difficult to measure, more subtle variables, including the teacher's personality, interpersonal relationships, and student-teacher/teacher-teacher relationships. Combs (1965) later arrived at the same conclusion. In the fifties, several writers (e.g., Bush, 1954; Moustakas, 1956;) lent support to the argument, emphasizing interpersonal skills of the teacher as an extremely important variable in his or her effectiveness.

This study was designed in an attempt to identify personality change from a sensitivity group. It was felt that effective educators would benefit from sensitivity training; however, it was unknown how significant the changes would be or how long they would last. No longer is the situation of the educator-expert preaching ex cathedra considered the most effective method of education (Powell, 1949; Rogers, 1979). It was further considered that each participant could potentially gain a greater appreciation of himself from the feedback of the other group members with regard to how he/she performs with a group (Goldberg, 1970).

METHOD

Eleven female students in a graduate education course, entitled Mental Health and Human Interaction, participated in a single 24-hour sensitivity training group. Prior to this session the class met for four, three-hour sessions. Each member was administered the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) prior to, immediately following, and one month after participating in the group. Additionally, the members were pre-tested and post-tested by means of the Rotter Incomplete Sentences Blank (RISB). Each member also met with the group leader for a one-hour interview within one

week following the group. The interviews were conducted in an open-ended manner, and no attempt was made to make any statistical inferences. Rather, the interviews determined participants' psychological functioning and reflections about the group. It should be noted that all interviewees responded positively and felt the experience gave them an opportunity to grow emotionally and relate better with their students, family, and friends.

Although the sensitivity training was directive--it was not confrontative--the leader emphasized support and encouraged individuality. There were no stipulations other than (1) maintaining confidentiality, (2) "owning" your feelings, and (3) respecting other group members. The session maintained an aura of warmth, acceptance, and security. The group went through the traditional stages and by the termination the members felt close to each other. Many of the participants shared extremely confidential feelings and experiences which they said they had never told anyone else.

The emotional climate was easily established from the onset. There was an atmosphere of openness, which created a fertile bed for discussion. The participants sat in a circle (including the leader). The members "rapped" with ease and friendliness. The setting was a classroom that was decorated with several meaningful and psychologically profound posters. During breaks, soft music played in the background. In an adjoining room were refreshments.

From the first hour of the group, there was an intensity of emotions. Because the time persons spend together in marathon is concentrated, marathons are viewed as an opportunity for intensive emotional experience (Goldberg, 1970). Leon Lurie of Washington, D.C., one of the more innovative therapists, employs marathon groups to commence his therapy groups

because, in one marathon, a group can reach a point of interrelationship that might otherwise take six months to achieve (Lurie, 1968).

RESULTS

The CPI and RISB were group administered immediately before, after, and one month following the training. The RISB, because of time, was not administered immediately following the group. Because of the element of subjectivity of scoring, this test was deleted when time ran out. Fig. 1 presents the pre-test scores for the CPI.

Insert Figure 1 here

On the CPI eight of the eighteen subscales demonstrated significant improvement after a one-month follow-up. These were socialization $p < .00$; social presence $p < .00$; tolerance $p < .00$; sociability $p < .00$; social acceptance $p < .01$; state of well being $p < .00$; responsibility $p < .00$; and self control $p < .00$. Only two of the subscales on the CPI improved immediately after the group. These were achievement $p < .04$ and state of well being $p < .03$. Following the one-month test, state of well being increased even further, however, achievement dropped to the pre-test mean. (Fig. 1)

After analyzing the findings of the RISB, researchers found that participants improved in their psychological functioning significantly (p .005; $f = 13.63$; $df = 1/14$). Questions that were responsible for the most change were numbers 28, 34, and 40, which were "Sometimes . . . ," "I wish . . . ," and "Most women . . . ." These questions demonstrated the highest gains ($p < .003$, $p < .003$, and $p < .001$, respectively).

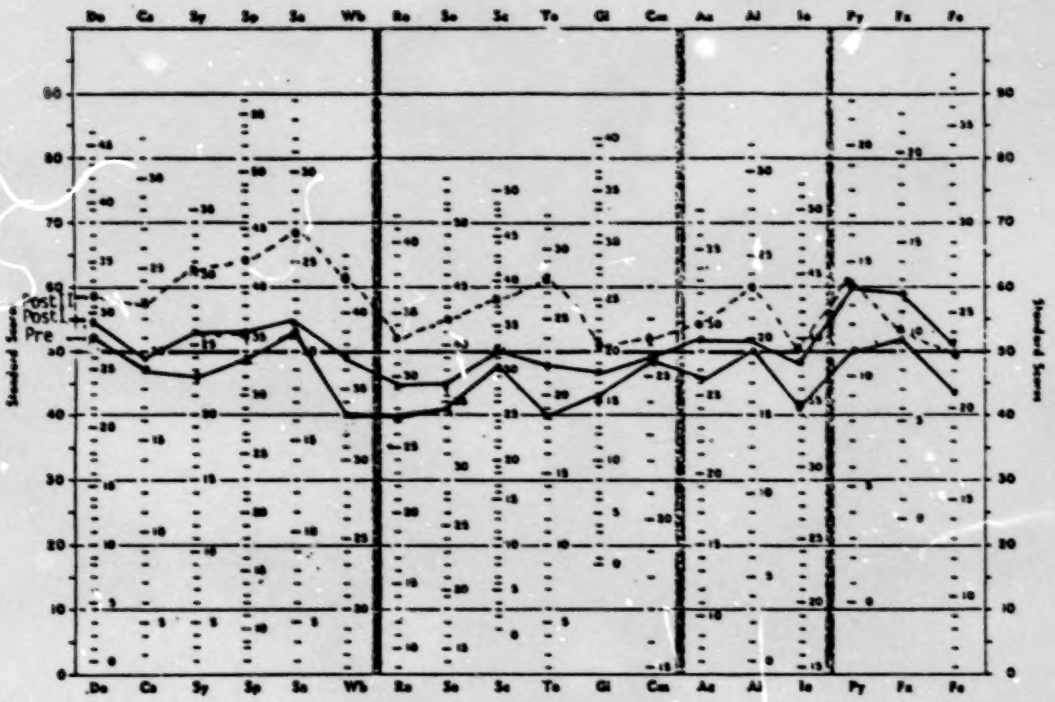
Answers on the pre-test RISB showed conflict and lack of self esteem, whereas the post-test trend demonstrated significant improvement in those areas. Both measures utilized revealed that sensitivity training has a high capability for emotional growth.

CONCLUSION

Although the literature depicts a general lack of research in the area of sensitivity training, there are many anecdotal remarks regarding their lack of worth (Goldberg, 1980). The effects of this study demonstrate significant improvement after a one-month follow-up of group training. Although it may be premature to report, sensitivity training looks as though it would be beneficial especially in the professional training of educators. Further research in this area will be conducted by re-administering the CPI and RISB within the next 12 months.

While we do not necessarily recommend marathon sensitivity groups for all education classes, we see a significant need for these kinds of experiences in senior level undergraduate courses as well as in selected graduate courses. These experiences seemed to help the educator by providing a supportive atmosphere for self-disclosure and getting in touch with feelings. This allows teachers to become more sensitive and aware of the problems of their students, which will lead to closer interpersonal relationships and more encouragement of the creative potentials of students.

Also, the act of self-disclosure in a sensitivity group often encourages the teacher to become more honest with self, thereby opening the doors for personal growth/change. Therefore, groups of this type serve a two-fold need: they are helpful to both teacher and student.



Subscale	Pre-Test	Post Test I	Post Test II
DO (Dominance)	52	55	58
CS (Capacity for Status)	47	49	57
SY (Sociability)	45	53	64
SP (Social Presence)	49	54	66
SA (Social Acceptance)	52	55	68
WB (Sense of Well-Being)	40	49	62
RE (Responsibility)	40	46	53
SO (Socialization)	43	45	56
SC (Self-Control)	47	51	57
TO (Tolerance)	40	47	62
GI (Good Impression)	43	45	52
CM (Communality)	48	49	53
AC (Achievement via Conformance)	45	53	55
AI (Achievement via Indepencence)	50	53	58
IE (Intellectual Efficiency)	50	53	58
PY (Psychological-Mindedness)	50	60	60
FX (Flexibility)	52	59	54
FE (Feminity)	45	53	50

Figure 1. One Month Later - CPI Scores

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